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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2506
April 4, 2002

Chairman Michael Powell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20554

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear Chairman Powell:

In December, I joined a group of other House members representing rural districts in writing to you with our serious concerns about the proposed merger of EchoStar and DIRECTV. For many of our constituents, satellite service is the only source of multi-channel video programming. My rural colleagues and I wanted safeguards in place to assure that the merger would protect rural America from possible monopolistic actions, including unfair pricing, lack of choice among programming, and restricted access to vital local telecommunication services.

It is my understanding that EchoStar CEO Charles Ergen has publicly stated that the two companies have offered binding commitments that the merger's benefits will be shared equally in all parts of the country. These assurances include provisions to offer one national price plan that is competitive with most cable services, and that the flat rate will apply even in rural areas, where most people are beyond the reach of cable. Additionally, the commitment includes guaranteed local broadcasting in all 210 nationwide markets and the deployment of high-speed internet access within two years.

If the above assurances are included in the final provisions, I believe that the merger should receive every consideration from both the Department of Justice and the Federal Communications Commission. With these safeguards in place, I am enthusiastic about the potential services that would benefit both urban and rural America. Moreover, with the delivery of satellite internet access, much of Missouri will receive the benefit of cable, DSL, and satellite competition. The EchoStar/ DIRECTV merger could ensure that rural residents of Missouri will never again have to worry about being stranded on the wrong side of the "Digital Divide." My confidence is reinforced further with the endorsement of the Missouri State Chamber of Commerce.

As you know, rural America has a long history of standing at the end of the trough when it comes to receiving the benefits of advanced telecommunication services. The EchoStar/DIRECTV merger could represent a welcome chance to change that. I urge you to ensure rural safeguards and give every consideration to this proposed merger.

Sincerely,



Sam Graves
Member of Congress

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